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SUBJECT: WILL SCO SUMMIT RAISE WESTERN NGOS?

CLASSIFIED BY: Richard E. Hoagland, Ambassador, EXEC, Embassy
Dushanbe.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (SBU) Russian Ambassador Ramazan Abdulatipov has gone public denouncing Western NGOs in Tajikistan. "Biznis i Politika" (April 20) published the long text of a speech he delivered earlier at a Dushanbe roundtable for Russian-speaking Tajik intelligentsia, "The Role of NGOs in the Development of Humanitarian Cooperation in the Post-Soviet Space."

¶2. (U) Embedded in the text that generally extols the "natural spiritual, intellectual, and cultural affinities of Russians and Tajiks" are a number of blunt swipes at Western NGOs.

-- It's "very bad" that Western countries have sent a large number of NGO, far removed by distance and spirit [spirituality], to the post-Soviet space.

-- Western governments send hundreds of NGOs and direct their work, often in non-transparent ways that serve their own ends.

-- Western governments "raised a hue and cry" when the Russian State Duma enacted a law to ensure that NGOs do not work against the interests of the state. Tajikistan could learn from this example.

-- Tajikistan is intrinsically linked with Russia in all spheres, especially their spiritual affinities. Both need to

ensure that Western NGOs do not impose their foreign social and cultural values on such ancient and deeply-rooted spiritual civilizations.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: Abdulatipov's speech is a toned-down version of the standard Russian line that U.S. NGOs are intelligence-agency tools whose job is to prepare populations to rise up to overthrow existing governments with "color revolutions." The new emphasis on foreign NGOs imposing alien social and cultural values echoes the Russian Orthodox Church's recent pronouncements on democracy, as well as Tashkent's screed that democracy means same-sex marriages. However, with regular reports of skinheads and other criminal xenophobes abusing and killing Tajiks and other foreigners in Russia, people in Tajikistan are likely to take Abdulatipov's high-minded claptrap about the shared cultural and spiritual values of the Russian and Tajik peoples with a grain of salt.

¶4. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED. Since the Kremlin began its full-court press in 2004 to reassert its authority in "its post-Soviet space," Moscow has placed special emphasis on Tajikistan because it fears losing its military base and vital SIGINT installation. Having tested the waters against the Western military presence in Central Asia in the 2005 Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SC) Summit communique, the SCO, not inconceivably, could use the 2006 SCO communique to raise the issue of Western NGOs in "the post-Soviet space." END COMMENT.

HOAGLAND